SAH/SCC SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS/ SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

NEWS

September/October 2014



IN THIS ISSUE

It Takes a Village Green

SAH/SCC Members' Celebration
Saturday, September 6, 2014; 2:30PM-5PM

This year, SAH/SCC celebrates our members with a very special visit to the Village Green (Reginald D. Johnson and Wilson, Merrill, & Alexander—architects; Fred Barlow, Jr.—landscape architect; Clarence S. Stein—site planner; 1941-42) in Baldwin Hills. If you haven't been to the Village Green, this is the time to see it!

Architectural historians and SAH/SCC members Steven Keylon and Holly Kane will be on hand to share the history and architectural significance of this beautiful post-war housing community. The Village Green was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2001, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993, and became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #174 in 1977.

Formerly known as Baldwin Hills Village, the site is considered the best and most fully developed example of Clarence S. Stein's "Radburn Idea" of neighborhood community planning, which calls for decentralized, self-contained plans that conserve open space, separate vehicular from pedestrian traffic, promote environmentalism, and encourage community life. The buildings and the site plan are largely unchanged, and constitute one of the finest examples of progressive idealism directed toward providing high-quality urban housing.

According to the Historic Structures Report prepared by Architectural Resources Group in 2010: "The style of the buildings, now characterized as Vernacular Modern, was called 'contemporary California architecture' in the *Los Angeles Times*. The simplicity of the style was typical of the era, but it also illustrated the designers' goal of creating cost-efficient housing that focused more on spatial layout than on high style architectural design. Eight building types were created. Variety was found in the placement of buildings, the unique landscaping of each garden

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Village Green *Photo: SAH/SCC*

SAH/SCC President's Letter

Hail to the New Chief!



Kenneth Breisch, President, Society of Architectural Historians
Photo: University of Southern California

Please join me in congratulating Kenneth Breisch on becoming national President of the Society of Architectural Historians! As many of you know, Ken is a noted author and educator, as well as an SAH/SCC Advisory Board member.

Ken received his undergraduate degree, M.A., and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, and he taught at the University of Delaware, University of Texas, and the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc). In 1999, he joined the School of Architecture at the University of Southern California (USC) to start the Historic Preservation Program, now known as the Heritage Conservation Program.

Ken is the author of *Small Public Library in America: A Study in Typology* (MIT Press, 1997). He has also co-edited two books on vernacular architecture for The Vernacular Architecture Forum, where he has served on the board of directors.

Ken is about to publish a Library of Congress book on libraries and a volume on the Los Angeles Public Library. Over the years, his research has been funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the University of Michigan.

He also has served as a member of the Santa Monica Planning Commission and currently sits on that city's library board.

Recently, SAH/SCC had the pleasure of co-sponsoring (with USC) a party at the Gamble House (Charles and Henry Green, 1908) celebrating Ken's ascendance. After sending off an invite to our members, I received a number of emails and calls thanking me for my service as President and wondering what I was going to do next. After some awkward silence, I had to inform these well-wishers that Ken was president of *SAH NATIONAL* and (for better or for worse) I was still president of SAH/Southern California Chapter.

So, in addition to congratulating Ken, this also seems like an appropriate time to clarify a few misconceptions about our organization. The Society of Architectural Historians is a national organization based in Chicago. It also has several regional chapters—the Southern California Chapter being one of the larger individual chapters. Membership in one is not the same as membership in the other. Both organizations are worthy of your support.

SAH National is responsible for the annual national conference and has recently added photo database access and other benefits to membership. The Southern California Chapter is its own separate 501c3 nonprofit organization. The Chapter conducts educational programming about Southern California's architectural heritage. We receive no money or other fiduciary support from national, and vice versa.

In recent years, Ken has expressed interest in increasing the interaction between the national organization and the chapters. SAH/SCC welcomes this opportunity and we look forward to working with Ken in this regard.

Ken is no doubt a worthy leader and scholar. But I also think that Ken's installation as President of SAH National speaks volumes about how far the West has come in demonstrating that it has a viable, rich, and important architectural heritage. Each of you has played an important role in making that happen. So let's all celebrate!

Cheers and congratulations to Ken Breisch!

—Sian Winship

Tour and Event Information:
1.800.972.4722
info@sahscc.org

SAH/SCC SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

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Photos: SAH/SCC

court, and the paint colors of the buildings. The earliest paint scheme included vibrant green, blue, salmon, and canary yellow on building exteriors; these changed to muted earth tones such as brown, green, blue and gray around 1946. The sleekness of the façades was reinforced by their long spans of stucco finish and wide eaves as the sun cast shadows according to the time of day. Balconies and ground floor patios broke up the flat look of the façades, and the placement of steel casement windows and wood doors provided a differing visual rhythm."

"Baldwin Hills Village had an advantage over other large-scale, multiple housing projects of the era in that the designers were afforded vast open land at the then Los Angeles city limits rather than in dense urban locations. Baldwin Hills Village was also innovative in its inclusion of private outdoor living spaces (patios and balconies), which, according to urban planner and author Catherine Bauer, was the first time these amenities were included in large-scale rental housing. In addition, the apartments themselves were noteworthy for their size and thoughtfully designed interiors."

The report continues: "The Village Green represents the work of a collection of highly talented individuals who sought to solve the physical and social problems of cities through new ideas in planning and design. Such solutions included reducing population density, designing open spaces for recreation and community activities, providing well-designed cost-efficient housing, encouraging positive social interaction, and incorporating the automobile without compromising the quality of life for a community."

After the presentation, members will have the opportunity to enjoy refreshments and socialize, as well as tour the grounds and selected residential units. Come see one of the most unexpected oases in urban Los Angeles. And let us thank you for your support in 2014!

SAH/SCC Members' Celebration: Village Green—Saturday, September 6, 2014; 2:30PM-5:00PM; free for SAH/SCC Members in good standing; $10 for non-member guests, applicable to new membership; Community Room, 5300 Rodeo Road, LA; reservations are required; registration—see order form on Page 6, email info@sahscc.org, call 800.972.4722.



Photo: Clarence Stein papers, 1905-1983. Repository: Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library



Photo: Clarence Stein papers, 1905-1983. Repository: Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library



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Photo: Clarence Stein papers, 1905-1983. Repository: Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library

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Bookmarks

Wilshire Boulevard Temple and the Warner Murals: Celebrating 150 Years

by Tom Teicholz;
contemporary photography by Tom Bonner

Although this book was released in 2013, because of SAH/SCC's lovely Members' Celebration at Wilshire Boulevard Temple last year—and because the book, like the restoration, is absolutely stunning—we're reviewing it now.

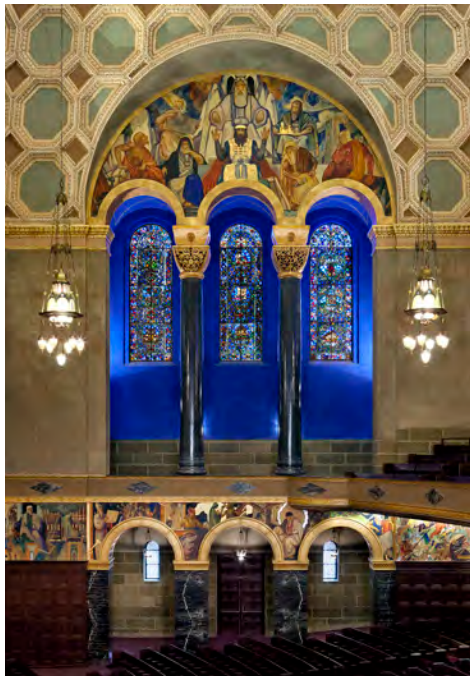
This is a rich historical document of the story of Jewish worship in Los Angeles that follows the impressive congregation (including many Hollywood moguls—then and now) on its journey to the perfect home. An early chapter chronicles the beginnings, when services were held at the rabbi's home, and continues through the building of Wilshire Boulevard Temple (Abraham A. Adelman, S. Tilden Norton, David C. Allison, 1929), and the congregation's official name change in 1937 to match that of the building. Succeeding chapters discuss the spiritual, civic, and political role of the temple in LA Jewish life.

In the late 1920s, Rabbi Edgar F. Magnin spearheaded the new building, which would move the then 67-year-old Congregation B'nai B'rith from downtown LA (Ninth and Hope Streets Temple, A.M. Edelman, 1896) to mid-Wilshire. Because of his prescient observation that "a society whose attention was increasingly fractured and beset by modernity would become increasingly visual-centric and image driven," we have the remarkable Warner Murals by Hugo Ballin.

For art and architecture fans, in particular, the chapters interspersed are a real treat. Sumptuous, bronze-edged pages are filled with contemporary photographs by noted architectural photographer Tom Bonner. These include extreme close-ups of the legendary murals, without which, the author acknowledges he "could not have written about the Warner Murals in the detail that I have."

There is much emphasis on the murals in the book, as they are epic in scale and depiction, and connect "the congregants to the Jewish people's history and tradition and to their sad, poetic, and yet triumphant procession from the biblical era to their arrival in the New World." In the center of the book, a spread of the bimah opens to a double gatefold—as a rabbi would open the ark—to reveal a 360-degree view of the murals. There's even a reproduction of Ballin's original contract with the Temple ($25,000, plus 10% of contractor's fees).

Ten years after the 1998 opening of a popular westside campus, the Wilshire building showed its neglect when a large piece of plaster fell from the ceiling. This prompted

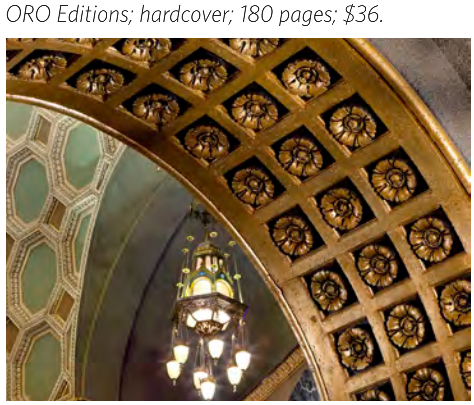


the restoration, which got underway after three years of planning and fundraising. Levin & Associates was hired as the architect, having conducted successful restorations of the Bradbury Building, Wiltern Theater, and Griffith Observatory, among other LA landmarks. "Every aspect of the building suffered from deferred maintenance," noted Brenda Levin, FAIA, upon first inspection.

Levin writes a personal essay in the book—"Wilshire Boulevard Temple: From the Heart"—that details the 10+ years of work, from initial surveys to final construction. She discusses the process and complexity of historic restoration and shows photos of conservators and specialists working on valued details. "I cannot describe," she concludes, "as either a congregant or as an architect with three decades of architectural practice, the profound personal significance and sense of pride I feel as we complete the restoration of Wilshire Boulevard Temple. I can only say that this has been a blessing that will be with me all my days."

Thanks to this richly illustrated and deeply researched book, the story is available to us for the rest of our days.

ORO Editions; hardcover; 180 pages; $36.

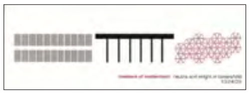


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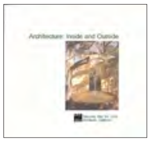
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SAH/SCC PUBLICATIONS



______ at $5 each

Masters of Modernism: eight-page, two-color brochure featuring works of Richard Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright in Bakersfield.



______ at $3 each

Architecture: Inside and Outside: 5"x5" folded color brochure featuring Santa Barbara's Lotusland, Casa del Herrero, and Val Verde.



______ at $12 each

Out of the Shadow: 24-page, two-color brochure from Phoenix travel tour featuring the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Al Beadle, Blaine Drake, Paolo Soleri, Edward B. Sawyer, Bennie Gonzales, and Will Bruder.



______ at $3 each

A Block in Glendale: pocket-size fandeck of cards featuring five diverse properties— including a Paul Williams residence—plus historical background information on the Brockmont Heights subdivision.



______ at $8 each

Rodney Walker 3 30 90: 12-page brochure featuring nine homes on five sites, as well as the architect's use of the three-foot module.



______ $4 each

Greta Magnusson Grossman: 3.5" x 8" 2-page color brochure featuring two residences by Greta Grossman.



______ at $8 each

Space and Learning: eight-page, four-color brochure on the historical and contemporary legacy of LA school architecture, featuring projects by Richard Neutra, Thom Mayne, Rios Clementi Hale Studios, and others.



______ at $5 each

Rodney Walker: The Ojai Years: tri-fold, black-and-white brochure featuring Walker's important residences in Ojai, with pictures and article by historian David Mason.



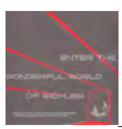
______ at $2 each

Kesling Homes: bi-fold, two-color brochure from the "Kesling Modern Structures" tour.



______ at $2 each

Union Station and MTA Transit Center: bi-fold map for a self-guided walking tour including historical facts and photos.



______ at $10 each

Modernism for the Masses: tri-fold brochure with inserts of detailed floor plans of Eichler homes visited on the Orange County tour.



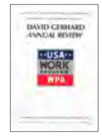
______ at $5 each

John Parkinson, Downtown: 11"x17", four-color brochure featuring a self-guided walking tour of Parkinson buildings in Downtown LA's historic core and beyond.



______ at $10 each

The Historic and Modern Spirit of Ventura: 20-page guide from Ventura tour.



______ at $5 each

David Gebhard Review: essays on the Works Project Administration by Robert W. Winter, Orville O. Clarke, Jr., and Mitzi March Mogul.



______ at $4 each

Killingsworth: A Master Plan for Learning: 11"x17", four-color walking tour brochure of the Cal State Long Beach campus features history of master plan development by architect Edward A. Killingsworth, FAIA.



______ at $8 each

Ray Kappe—Apotheosis: eight-page brochure features five Kappe Houses from 1959 to 1966 in the Royal Woods development of the San Fernando Valley.



______ at $8 each

Conjunctive Points: four-color, 11"x17" brochure featuring a 20-building walking tour of the Hayden Tract, designed by architect Eric Owen Moss and developed by Samitaur Constructs.

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SAH/ORDER FORM

JOIN OR RENEW TODAY!

SAH/SCC is a 501c 3 nonprofit organization dedicated to providing its members with opportunities to learn about and experience the rich architectural heritage of Southern California and beyond. Our volunteer board members create tours, lectures, travel tours, and other events that explore the ideas behind the architecture as well as the buildings that result from them. From modern to craftsman, from Spanish Colonial to contemporary, our programs are the best-kept secrets in Southern California!

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

- Advance notice of all SAH/SCC events—important because they usually sell out just to members
- 20-30% discounts on tour and event ticket prices
- Bi-monthly E-news with printable newsletter
- FREE tickets to our annual Members' Celebration event
- Special Members-Only E-Alerts about upcoming events
- A tax deduction for your membership dues
- The knowledge that you are supporting our mission to increase public awareness of Southern California's architectural heritage

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SAH/SCC EVENT TICKETS

Members' Celebration—September 6, 2014

_____ SAH/SCC member ticket(s)

_____ SAH/SCC non-member ticket(s) at $10 = $_______

Ticket fee is applicable to new membership at the event.

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Architecture Photography & Exploration

Public Exhibition Opening, September 17th, 5-8:30PM

Two exhibitions at Christopher W. Mount Gallery at Pacific Design Center (Cesar Pelli, Gruen Associates, 1975) focus on the architectural realm through the lens of photographer Benny Chan and the hand of architect Bryan Cantley.

Chan, a noted architectural photographer with picture credits in magazines and newspapers in the U.S. and abroad, is well known to most of the local architecture community. These photos, however, will not be as familiar, as they show another side of Los Angeles. Contrary to the cliché of beautiful beaches, palm tree-lined boulevards, or glittery Hollywood, this is a largely dystopic and industrial side of the city, a part of LA often hidden and ignored by natives and tourists alike. (Closes November 7, 2014.)

Cantley, a professor at Cal State Fullerton, has long explored architectural forms and meanings through the (almost lost) art of the hand sketch. Once referred to somewhat factiously as "architectural pornography," Cantley's work is beautiful, complex, and eerily suggestive of a near future in which our surroundings and lives are inundated with signifiers void of any connections or clear paths. (Closes January 9, 2015.)



Photo: Benny Chan